JI KANG'S ESSAY "MUSIC HAS IN IT NEITHER GRIEF NOR JOY" (聲無哀樂論) AND THE STRUCTURE (理) OF PERCEPTION

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Ji Kang's Critique of the Confucian Views on the Structure of Music

Most interpreters of Ji Kang's (223–262) essay "Music Has in It neither Grief nor Joy" (*Sheng wu aiyue lun* 聲無哀樂論) read this text mainly as a critique of the formalization of music within the framework of Confucian ritual. Although this stance certainly represents an important aspect of his understanding of music, Ji Kang proceeds a step further: he regards the idea that emotion is an intrinsic part of music as degrading to music as such (Chai 2009, p. 1). The function of music within ritual is not all that concerns him, however. In several places in his argument he also contests the simplified formalization of music as a medium for the "proper" structural connection between the cosmic order and human awareness. Following the original meaning of the character *li* 理, I translate this concept in the sense of structure and structural pattern, respectively. In dealing with later semantic modifications (principle, reason, order, etc.), I have also proceeded from an understanding that the semantic scope of structure includes the sense of a system, systematic ordering, and/or relations.[1]

The structural relation between music and mind is stated in the *Book of Rituals* (*Liji* 禮記):

> 凡音者，生於人心者也；樂者，通倫理者也。
> All sounds arise from the human mind; music connects us with the social ethics of the all-embracing structure (of the cosmic order). (*Liji,* "Yueji" 樂記 5)

Here it must be pointed out that the ancient Chinese structural worldview was not simply reflected in its interpretation of the function of music. The assumption of the structural connection between music and the cosmic order (i.e., the basic structure of the cosmos, *tianli* 天理) was founded on the supposition that the basic precondition for our perception of the external world was the very compatibility between the structure of the cosmos and the structure of the human mind (Rošker 2010, p. 82). In addition, the Confucian classics were grounded in the presumption that the structure of music was compatible with the structure of the cosmos. Thus, the performance of "proper" music could reunite men with the "regularity" of the cosmic order; in other words, the structure of music could incorporate human beings into the totality of everything that exists. Therefore, music was seen as an important element of the re-creation of the highest ideal of Confucian holism, namely the "unity of men and nature" (*tian ren heyi* 天人合一). Ritual as such was seen not just as an arbitrary form

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but as a formalized pattern that, properly executed, could be structurally connected with the cosmic order:

> 禮也者, 理也。[2]
> Ritual is structured. (*Liji,* "Zhongni yan ju" 仲尼燕居 6)

In early medieval China, the prevailing views on the relationship between music and the mind of the audience originated mainly in the above-mentioned Confucian paradigm of the one-dimensional structural connection between music and the cosmic order. Based on this understanding, founded on the structural compatibility of mind and the cosmic order, music becomes the carrier of emotions that can be transferred from the composer or performer to the listener. Consequently, music is perceived as a conductor of emotions that can be reproduced in the minds of the people who listen to it (Henricks 1983, p. 71). Ji Kang opposed this prevailing position. He believed that music had an inherent structure that was manifested in its quality; however, this structurally conditioned quality was expressed not through emotions but through harmony (*he* 和). Harmony does not cause (and therefore convey) emotions but only releases or liberates emotions that already exist in the mind of the listener, thereby having a cathartic effect. In this way he explains the fact that different people can react to the same piece of music with completely different feelings (ibid.).

Ji Kang does not oppose the presumption that music is structured. What he opposes is the standpoint that the structure of music is directly connected to the structure of emotions:

> 至于愛與不愛，喜與不喜，人情之變，統物之理，唯止於此。
> Concerning love and not-love, good mood and bad, and all the changes in human sentiments—these cannot be a part of the all-uniting structure. (Ji Kang 1962, p. 207)[3]

According to Ji Kang, the feeling and expression of emotions are naturally also based on certain structural principles:

> 夫小哀容壞，甚悲而泣；哀之方也。小歡顏悅，至樂而笑；樂之理也。何以明之？夫至親安豫，則怡然自若，所自得也。
> Moodiness is expressed in a dejected face, but severe grief leads to sobbing. This is the tendency of grief. Small cheerfulness lights up our appearance, but great joy leads to laughter. This is the structural pattern of joy. (ibid., p. 220)

The structure of emotions, however, is not directly connected to the structural principles of music:

> 至夫笑噱，雖出于歡情，然自以理成；又非自然應聲之具也。
> Although smiles and laughter originate from happy feelings, they are results of their own structural pattern. They are by no means natural reactions to music. (p. 221)

For Ji Kang, the structure of music represents a part of the all-embracing cosmic structure, and is therefore of a rational nature. He sees music as something that acts in accordance with certain principles. The command of these principles, however, is

not accessible to everyone. Therefore, he also opposes the traditional Confucian belief that every kind of music could be comprehended by every human being:

> 夫聖人窮理，謂自然可尋，無微不照。苟無微不照，理蔽則雖近不見。
> The sages have complete insight into the structural order. Therefore they can illuminate and explain everything that exists in nature. But if the structural order remains hidden for someone, then it is not possible to see it, even though one observes it from close proximity. (p. 216)

He also reproaches the Confucians for their oversimplified view of music. The impossibility of automatic transfer of emotions through the structure of music is not only due to the absence of emotions in the music itself but is also connected with the fact that the comprehension of its structure requires special skills. In the oversimplified, one-dimensional presentation of the structural transfer of emotions through music, Ji Kang sees an ideology that serves the interests of the ruling bureaucracy (pp. 203–204). Perfect music can only be created or performed by masters who are wise enough to comprehend it (p. 210).

Ji Kang also criticizes the Confucians for founding their presumptions only on quotations from the ancient classics instead of taking the trouble to gain an insight into the structural laws of all that exists that also permeate music (p. 202). He believes that emotions are not—and cannot be—a product of musical structure; they are reactions to other laws (p. 212). Although the structure of music is rational, it also differs from the structure of logic or thought (p. 219).

This is the very proof for his conviction that music and mind are not the same, that is, they are not of one unified structure (p. 214). In this context, we encounter another basic presumption that has led Ji Kang to the view that a structural transfer from the mind of the composer to the mind of the listener is not possible. For him, this transfer is already impossible because of the complexity of the musical structure, which is not based on a single all-embracing tonal construction but upon an infinite number of different structural patterns (p. 225). For Ji Kang, perfect music has a completely different function: its effect is not the production of emotions, but the aesthetic experience of being, the incorporeal integrity of life. The sacred rulers of ancient times were still able to understand this, for they knew how to

> 導其神氣，養而就之；迎其情性，致而明之；使心與理相順，氣與聲相應；合乎會通以濟其美。
> convey its spiritual creativeness, how to cultivate and complete it. They accepted its nature and could elucidate its perfectness. This facilitated accordance of the mind with its fundamental structure and linked together the creative potential with its sounds. Such unity brings up the perfect beauty. (ibid.)

The Actuality (Shi 實) *of Music and Its Conceptualization* (Ming 名)[4]

The main subject of Ji Kang's critique of Confucian ideology is its oversimplified representation of music as something that could produce in the human mind the emotions that are suitable for a morally faultless life in society. For him, music cannot

be seen as a structural carrier of emotions from composer/performer to listener. Therefore, it cannot be reduced to ideological or propagandistic means for the realization and preservation of the interests of the ruling class.

Ji Kang's statement of this point of view is grounded in several connected arguments. The first, which was briefly introduced in the previous section, follows his understanding that the structure of being (the all-embracing cosmic order) is, like the structure of music, infinite (p. 198). The compatibility of both structures (cosmic and musical) is conditioned by their openness and infinite nature. Since the structure of mind is also infinite, we can perceive the beauty of perfect music. Human emotions, however, are limited, and this, in his opinion, is the main reason why it is impossible to reduce music to the function of a mediator transferring emotions between different minds (p. 201).

Despite the structural compatibility of mind and cosmic order,[5] emotions still represent a limited part of the phenomenal world, which cannot be equated with the openness of the basic structure of existence:

> 至夫哀樂，自以事會，先遘於心，但因和聲，以自顯發。
> Speaking about grief and joy, these feelings are caused by events we experience; they are as such already contained in the human mind. The harmony in music only causes an expression of these (already existent) emotions to be released. (p. 204)

Emotions are thus our inner reactions to stimuli from the external world. The unity of cosmic structure as well as the inherent integrity of musical structure lies beyond the phenomenal sphere of multifarious, particular patterns of perception that determine our everyday life. Emotions, on the other hand, belong to subjective factors that cannot be generalized:

> 由此言之，則外內殊用，彼我異名。
> From this point of view, the internal and external worlds are different and this is why my subjective concepts differ from the ones of other people. (p. 199)

Ji Kang's epistemology of music mainly deals on the one hand with the question of the relationship between music as external actuality (*shi* 實) and on the other with the perception or conceptualization (*ming* 名) of music. Ji Kang believed that these two entities were mutually completely separated.[6]

The terms *ming* 名 and *shi* 實 belong to the basic binary categories[7] of classical Chinese epistemology (Rošker 2008, pp. 10–11). The binary categorical relationship between these two mutually opposite poles already formed the basis of the Confucian Theory of the Rectification of Names (正名論) which was also—in multifarious ways—further developed by several representatives of the Sophist School (名家) and the Later Mohist School (後期墨家). Later on, it was elaborated and alternated by the Neo-Daoist philosophers of the Wei–Jin period, particularly within the disputes that marked the groups of Pure Conversations (清談) and the School of Mystery (玄學), to which Ji Kang also belonged.

Like most of his contemporaries, Ji Kang was also caught up in the debate over the ability of language and comprehension to accurately portray actuality. Although

the clarification of this question was not the primary intent of his treatise, the illumination of his view on the relation between concepts and actualities can contribute in many ways to the understanding of the integral complexity of his arguments.

In the very beginning of his argument, Ji Kang explicitly states that the problem discussed is primarily the question of the relationship between concepts and actualities (p. 196). According to Ji Kang, the focus of the proper or suitable conceptualization of objects must be on their essential features; conceptualization should not be formed in accordance with marginal or random characteristics of the object that is to be named and conceptualized, respectively. This equally holds true for the conceptualization of music and of emotions:

> 因事與名，物有其號。哭謂之哀，歌謂之樂。斯其大較也。然『樂云樂云，鍾鼓云乎哉』？哀云哀云，哭泣云乎哉？因茲而言，玉帛非禮敬之實，歌哭非哀樂之主也。
> Names (concepts) have to conform to the events to which they refer. Therefore, every object has its designation. When we cry we name it grief, and when we sing we say we are joyful. This is generally true. But when we speak about music[8] we mean more than drums and percussion! And when we speak about grief, we mean more than crying and lamentation! Therefore, I claim that silk and jade are not the essence (actuality) of respectful rituals, as singing and crying are not the main feature of music! (p. 198)

Ritual is an actuality that can be conceptualized neither through superficial, visually perceivable details nor through assessments of valuables that are a part of it. Its real meaning, which is expressed by its name, that is, by the *concept of ritual,* is obviously at a symbolic level (regardless of whether this level is subjectively seen as spiritual or as ideological). This symbolic level, which, among other things, is expressed by the central characteristic of music, that is, its "shapelessness" (無象), represents one of Ji Kang's main arguments against the prevailing confusion between concepts and actualities (p. 198). Analogously, the emotions of grief and joy (as expressed through the notions of crying and singing) also cannot belong to concepts that define the essential actuality of music.

The criterion that defines music's real actuality is its quality, which is by no means connected to human sentiment. Human sentiment (which consists of various emotions) is the very concept by which grief and joy are defined. Both grief and joy are therefore specific actualities that belong to the concept of emotions. Here, Ji Kang wants us to temporarily forget the prevailing patterns of binary categorical considerations, which suggests that in the relation between music and grief or joy the first consideration is an actuality, while the latter two are concepts. If we observe both of them separately it becomes clear that the actuality of music has to be conceptualized in accordance with axiological and aesthetic criteria, while the actualities of both grief and joy belong to the concept of sentiment, which is essentially psychological and emotive.[9] The first belongs to external reality, the latter to the sphere of human inner reality.

This presumption forms the foundation of Ji Kang's above-mentioned conclusion that music (which transcends the dissimilarities of our everyday experiences), and

grief and joy (being subjective reactions to them), are two separate entities.[10] Therefore, grief and joy cannot function as concepts that define music:

> 聲音自當以善惡為主，則無關于哀樂；哀樂自當以情感而後發，則無係于聲音。名實俱去，則盡然可見矣。
> The chief characteristic of music is its quality (i.e., its being good or bad). This has nothing to do with grief or joy. Grief and joy are released from emotions and have no connection to music. If concepts and actualities are both kept apart, then this can be seen completely clearly. (p. 200)

Ji Kang's opponent, the guest from the state of Qin, still would not admit that grief and joy had no relation to music. For him, it is completely clear that they are, if not produced, then at least released by music. In his argument, he leans on numerous historical testimonies, as well as on his own observations of people's reactions to different kinds of music. He concludes his argument with a skeptical remark that shows that he doesn't believe in the possibility of separating concepts from actualities (p. 202). But Ji Kang doesn't want to abandon the discrimination between concepts and actualities as such. He merely negates the prevailing interpretation of the relationship between music and the emotions of grief and joy that sees music as actuality, and grief or joy as concepts, which define this actuality.

First of all, music and grief or joy equally belong to different forms of actuality. Second, these two forms of actuality cannot be directly compared, since the first one belongs to the sphere of the universal and the second to the domain of subjective actualities.[11] Although music can appear simultaneously together with feelings of grief or joy, it does not define, condition, or produce them. Ji Kang tries to explain this by pointing out the important epistemological difference between the release of feelings and their generation (p. 206). Here, he wants to draw attention to the difference between particular words in their function of designations. The word *fa* 發 (to release, to liberate, to rise) means something different from the word *sheng* 生 (to bear, to give birth, to live, to produce).[12] As with the written records, words are also semantic symbols or designations (號), used for expressions or designations of concepts (名):

> 夫言非自然一定之物，五方殊俗，同事異號，趣舉一名，以為標識耳。
> Language is not naturally fixed. Different places have different customs and different designations for the same objects. All these (different designations) that are used for the discernment (of objects) are formed from unified concepts. (p. 213)

Human sentiment is thus a concept (名) of the human mind that can manifest itself in the particular emotional effects (actualities 實) of grief and joy (哀樂). The concept of music, however, is "empty" (虛名); that is, it is an abstract concept without previously defined, absolute values or limitations. Therefore, music as such cannot be directly compared with the determined actualities of grief and joy:

> 焉得染太和于歡慼、綴虛名于哀樂哉？
> How can you soil the highest harmony with cheerfulness and melancholy? And how can you mix up an empty concept with grief and joy? (p. 225)

The "Empty Concept" of Music and Harmony

According to Ji Kang, the "empty concept" of music, which surpasses the limitations of everyday fears, pleasures, and all other actualities of sentiment, can be fulfilled only by harmony, which is its essential feature. For the Neo-Daoist Ji Kang, harmony was a metaphor for the *dao* 道, which, on the other hand, also represented an expression of cosmic structure (*li* 理). Zhuangzi, for instance, considered the concept *li* 理 to be a manifestation of the structural order of *dao*:

> 夫德，和也；道，理也。
> Therefore virtue is harmonic and *dao* is structured. (*Zhuangzi,* "Shan xing" 繕性 1)

Guan Zhong 管仲 also understood structure as something that is defined by *dao*:

> 交正分之謂理。順理而不失之謂道。
> Dividing different interpersonal relationships and their proper distinguishing is that which is called structure. To follow the structure without losing it is that which is called *dao.* (*Guan Zhong* 2004, "Jun chen" 君臣 I:8)

A similar relation between *dao* and *li* has also been quite clearly defined by Han Feizi 韓非子:

> 萬物各異理, 萬物各異理而道盡 . . . 道者，萬物之所然也，萬理之所稽也。理者，成物之文也；道者，萬物之所以成也。故曰：«道，理之者也»。
> All that exists has own structures; but even though each existing thing has its own special structure, all of these are being exhausted by *dao*. . . . *Dao* is that which makes all things what they are. It is that which unites all particular structures. Structure is a pattern that is present in all completed things, while *dao* is the very reason of their formation. Therefore, we say that "*dao* is structured." (Han Fei 2010, "Jie Lao" 解老 23)

In his interpretation of harmony, Ji Kang has followed the Daoist understanding of this notion. Thus, his comprehension of harmony, which underlies his essay on music, may also be seen as another subtle critique of Confucian ritual. The same holds true for Ji Kang's understanding of the notion *li* 理. In Daoist treatises, adaptation to the structure (*li* 理) was, similar to amalgamation with the Way (*dao* 道), something natural, something that can be seized spontaneously when humans are willing to return to a life of simplicity. The principle of non-action (*wu wei* 無為), which represented the basic precondition for such an insight, can therefore also lead us to momentous, unaffected unity with structure and simultaneously with *dao.* The Confucian connotation of the notion of harmony, on the other hand, mainly referred to the social harmony that resulted from every individual knowing his or her place in the social order, and playing his or her part well. The Confucians had to maintain close watch over the transformation and assignment of the proper cosmic structure into the social sphere. In this context, structure (*li* 理) accordingly represented well-ordered (i.e., proper and reasonable) relations between cosmic structures and the perceptive patterns of the human mind. Thus, in Confucian discourse, "proper" music played an important part as a well-ordered tool for the social integration of individuals, for

whom the consideration of the "proper" structure that determined "proper" music was essential for a harmonious society.

For Ji Kang, the harmony of sequential, rhythmic, tonal structure is the only concept that defines the actuality of music. Only music that implies a harmonic structure can therefore be perceived (or conceptualized) as real music by the human mind. Naturally, such a concept of music cannot contain emotions, since they are contradictory to any harmonic reconciliation.[13] In this context, Ji Kang reproaches the Confucians for their cognitive inconsistency: their fear of the harmful effects of "inappropriate" music is not only exaggerated but also completely groundless and illogical:

> 心感于和，風俗壹成，因而名之。然所名之聲，無中于淫邪也；淫之與正同乎心。
> When harmony touches the human mind, all local diversities reunite in the concept (of music). Music is conceptualized in this way and can therefore not imply any lewdness or depravity. Lewdness and correctness are equally parts of the human mind. (p. 231)

For Ji Kang, the highest form of "empty concept" that defines music is harmony. It is this structural feature that distinguishes it from concepts that are produced in the mind. He repeatedly emphasizes that the latter are necessarily dependent on external states and impulses, while harmony is the natural reality of music.

The universal actuality of music can certainly influence the particular actualities of perception, but music can nevertheless not function as a mediator between different subjective minds:

> 聲音以平和為體，而感物無常；心志以所俟為主，應感而發。然則聲之與心，殊塗異軌，不相經緯。
> The essence of music is in its equilibration and harmony. Their impact upon external objects cannot be standardized. The chief feature of mind, however, is its dependence (on the external world), since its effects cannot be released until it reacts to what it perceives. Thus, the paths and tracks of music and mind are completely different and can never intersect. (p. 222)

Therefore musical harmony is the very factor that moves the human mind and causes the release of grief or joy, which have until now been stored inside the human mind. Nevertheless, harmony is something that cannot be completely comprehended by the human mind for it is indefinable, invisible, and shapeless. The structure of harmony is infinite and open, just like the structure of the universe. Therefore it can be perceived only through individual feelings, which are released by it in our consciousness:

> 夫哀心藏於內，遇和聲而後發；和聲無象，而哀心有主。夫以有主之哀心，因乎無象之和聲而後發，其所覺悟，唯哀而已。
> Grief is hidden in the human mind and is released when we listen to harmonious music. Musical harmony is shapeless, while the grief in our mind is subjective. This subjective grief in our mind is released by this invisible harmony, and all we can be aware of at this moment is grief alone. (p. 198)

Harmony cannot be equated with sentiment, however. Therefore, the creators of perfect music cannot claim it was their own and apply it as a medium for influencing other people's minds. Its harmonious, natural structure manifests the fact that music has its own actuality, which evades and exceeds all the limitations of human consciousness:

> 至樂雖待聖人而作，不必聖人自執也。何者？音聲有自然之和，而無係于人情。
> Perfect music can be created by saints only. But the saints do not necessarily control it. Why is this so? Music has natural harmony, which has nothing to do with human feelings. (p. 209)

Thus, musical harmony is a part of the all-encompassing structure of nature. The deepest principles of this structure remain incomprehensible to the human mind. Therefore, harmony can spring up in manifold stylistic and formal versions of music and is not linked to certain types of musical expression:

> 上生下生，所以均五聲之和，敍剛柔之分也。
> Regardless of an ascending or descending progression (of playing), the five tones can always form a harmony. In this sense, there is no difference between sharpness and softness. (p. 213)

Ji Kang's fictive opponent does not believe that musical harmony is able to surpass and unite all changes in the phenomenal world that manifest themselves in the daily emotional responses of a listener (p. 116).[14] In this context, Ji Kang equates musical harmony with the reconciliation of different tastes. A person who listens to music and immerses him/herself in the feelings released by it remains limited to his/her sensually conditioned perception, similar to someone who enjoys food and remains focused only on the pleasure of a single taste. The great unity, which can be experienced only through the reconciliation of all conditions of our existence and thus in the re-unification of humanity and the all-embracing integrity of the cosmos, cannot be grasped by such people:

> 美有甘，和有樂；然隨曲之情，近乎和域；應美之口，絕于甘境，安得哀樂于其間哉？
> Beauty implies sweetness, and harmony contains joy. But the feeling (of joy) that follows the melody is separated from the sphere of harmony. A mouth that reacts to the attractiveness (of one taste) is cut off from the domain of sweetness. How could we find grief and joy in it? (ibid.)

Besides, claims Ji Kang, liveliness and tranquility are characteristics of certain types of music, whereas grief and joy are different forms of feeling:

> 若有所發，則是有主于內，不為平和也。以此言之，躁靜者，聲之功也；哀樂者，情之主也；不可見聲有躁靜之應，因謂哀樂皆由聲音也。
> That which is released comes from the mind and is not connected with balance and harmony. From this standpoint, it can be asserted that liveliness and tranquility are effects of music, whereas grief and joy arise from sentiment. We cannot claim that grief and joy arise from music just because we notice that it contains liveliness or tranquility. (p. 219)

Here, Ji Kang also reveals his opposition to the standpoint according to which certain forms of musical expression give rise to certain fixed feelings. The harmony that is contained in any genuine music can certainly release feelings, but this doesn't mean that lively music would always give rise to joy, and tranquil melodies to grief (p. 217). Harmony is something that can exist only in its entirety. Therefore, it cannot be grasped through limited feelings, which are not means of perception but concrete reactions to the occurrences in the human mind:

> 夫音聲和比，人情所不能已者也。
> Harmonic sequences of music are something which cannot be experienced by human emotions. (ibid.)

However, this does not mean that Ji Kang did not find any connection between the qualities of music and the human sentiment released by them. As we will see in the next section, he strongly stressed that musical perfection manifests itself in harmony as a part of the endless structure of the universe. Thus, the structure of perfect music always releases in every human being an emotional state of mental harmony that connects us with the essence of nature.

In the Confucian politics of dividing "proper" and "regular" music from "improper" and "licentious" music, Ji Kang sees an intolerable and essentially harmful measure that molds it into the narrowness of the ideological tool of the ruling morality (p. 225).

Conclusion: The Freedom of Music as an Expression of the Harmonious Structure of Being

According to Ji Kang, such measures are not merely harmful, but also degrading—not only for the people who thus remain excluded from the wonderful variety of different kinds of music, but also for the music itself. By analyzing his essay from the standpoint of the structural relation between music, the universe, and the human mind and through Ji Kang's comprehension of the relation between the actuality (實) of music and its conceptualization (名), new aspects of his critique of Confucian ritual become apparent.

For Ji Kang, the essence of music is perfection, which manifests itself in harmony as a part of the all-embracing, incomprehensible, and simultaneously inexhaustible structure (*li* 理) of the universe.[15] The adjustment to this great natural structure, which can be experienced through the very structure of harmony in music, enables us to grow out of our narrow, everyday world of countless small/minute phenomena and to reunite with the essence of nature. In this sense, the "emptiness" of harmony surpasses the binaries of internal and external (內外) worlds on the one hand, and even of concepts and actualities (名實) on the other. Ji Kang is very well aware of the fact that these binary categories are merely tools of perception or methods of comprehension. Thus, he lays stress on the fact that the actuality (實) of music has to be conceptualized (名) in accordance with universal axiological and aesthetic criteria, while

the actualities (實) of both grief and joy belong to the mental and subjective concepts (名) of sentiment.

In the view that music should contain concrete feelings (as, for instance, grief or joy) he sees a completely mistaken approach to music, for this view understands music as something basically subjective and personalized. In Ji Kang's view, harmony, which represents the essential feature of music, is an essential part of the structural order of the universe. This structure is universal, although it can be expressed in the innumerable forms of different structural patterns.[16]

Ji Kang doesn't oppose the thesis according to which music moves the human mind. However, he points out that music can be moved only through harmony (and not through feelings that are supposedly implied in music). The structural transfer of musical harmony into the human mind is possible, but it is necessarily outside the reach of human control. The structural harmony of music is inexhaustible and can therefore exist only in freedom, similar to Zhuangzi's seabird, which sadly passes away in the golden cage of human desires.[17] The misuse of music for the purposes of propaganda is therefore humiliating, although even the most perfect harmony can contain a political message.[18]

The will of the people, including (Confucian) rulers, always remains limited to the affairs of the phenomenal world. Their fear of the unbridled feelings of the crowds, which have to be controlled and tamed, cannot be attenuated by hopeless attempts to divide "proper" from "improper" harmony, and even less by useless attempts to transpose emotions into music. Thus, in Ji Kang's opinion, it would be better if they could stick to the instructions of Laozi and perform non-action (無為),[19] without violently intervening into the structure of the harmonic order of the universe. It would be much better if they could behave more ecologically, in a more nature-friendly way, and if they could leave earthly matters to be performed spontaneously and in accordance with the great Way. Since the latter is a manifestation of the natural structural order (*li* 理) the structural patterns of perfect music can reunite the human mind with its all-embracing harmony.

Notes

1 – For a more detailed establishment of such interpretations see Rošker 2010.

2 – This quotation is not to be translated so as to mean an equalization of two objects as substantives (*li* 禮 = ritual and *li* 理 = structure) but as a more detailed definition of the substantive *li* 禮 (ritual) through the adjective *li* 理 (structured).

3 – All quoted translations from Ji Kang's essay are my own and often significantly different from previous translations accessible to me. The translation that I do draw from and compare with is by Robert G. Henricks, from his annotated collection; see Henricks 1983, pp. 71–107.

4 – The term *ming* 名 has commonly been translated into Indo-European languages and even into Modern Chinese as "name" or "naming." In Classical Chinese philosophy, especially in the epistemological discourses of the Mohist and Sophist Schools, this term chiefly referred to concepts or to the conceptualization of objects from the external reality (Zhang 2003, p. 118). In the present article, I have mainly applied this semantic aspect of the term.

5 – 使心與理相順 (Ji Kang 1962, p. 225). Mind is in accordance with the structure (of music).

6 – 然則心之與聲，明為二物 (Ji Kang 1962, p. 214). Therefore, it is completely clear that mind and music are two different things.

7 – Binary categories represent one of the fundamental methodological characteristics of traditional Chinese philosophy. They belong to special kinds of dualities that try to approach the most real state of actualities by exploring relativities, expressed through two oppositional notions. The following are some of the best known binary categories: *yinyang* 陰陽 (shade and sun), *tiyong* 體用 (organ and function), *mingshi* 名實 (concept and actuality), *liqi* 理氣 (structure and creativeness), and *benmo* 本末 (root and summit) (Rošker 2008, pp. 10–11).

8 – The traditional word for music, *yue* 樂, has been written with the same character as the word *le* 樂, which designates joy. Therefore, this sentence could also be translated as: "When we speak about joy, we mean more than drums and percussion!" See also Egan 1997, p. 13: "The ambiguity of the character 樂, used both for *yue* 'music' and *le* 'pleasure' also figures in the 'Record of Music' and would pose a special problem to those who liked to enjoy music's 'sadness.'"

9 – See de la Motte-Haber 1990, pp. 63–70.

10 – See note 6 above.

11 – Cf. Ji Kang's statement quoted above, "由此言之，則外內殊用，彼我異名" (Ji Kang 1962, p. 199).

12 – See also the italics in Henricks 1983, p. 81.

13 – See Egan 1997, pp. 26–27: "The aim of Ji Kang's argument is to stress the importance of cultivating inner peace and serenity. . . . In Ji Kang's view, nothing is more harmful to the spirit than apprehensions and emotions. For most men the great problem is simply that 'thoughts and apprehensions diminish the refined spirit, and sorrow and joy injure the calm essence.'"

14 – Here, we also have to consider the epistemological difference between particular harmonies that are subject to continuous changes and thus represent parts of the phenomenal world by themselves, and the very concept or idea of harmony, which transcends these changes.

15 – Modern Western musicology also came to similar conclusions: "While a composer can alternate the tonal-systemic order, he cannot define the musical ex-

pression. At the utmost, he can erase it. Thus, there is something un-arbitrary and un-conscious connected to the emotional sense of music. It draws our attention to fundamental universal structures which exist ahead of music" (de la Motte-Haber 1998, p. 64).

16 – In this context, Ji Kang often quotes Zhuangzi's statement about the same wind that blows through countless interstices and always causes different melodies; it is just because of this that everything is exactly what it is (夫吹萬不同, 而使其自已) (*Zhuangzi,* "Qiwu lun" 齊物論 1). This is also comparable to the later Neo-Confucian standpoint on countless structural patterns of being that are all united within one all-embracing structure (一物之理即萬物之理) (Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi 1981, p. 13).

17 – Zhuangzi 2001, "Zhi le" 至樂 5.

18 – Later on Ji Kang learned this to his own cost when he played the melody of Great Peace on the eve of his execution. The legend says that he was the only person who could play this tune, and when he finished he said that this rhapsody was no more (Egan 1997, p. 29).

19 – See for instance chapter 37: 道常無為而無不為， 侯王若能守之，萬物將自化 (Laozi 2001, p. 32).

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